

"This is the fundamental law of the Torah... and they take unto you a completely red heifer." (19:2)

The law of the *Parah Adumah* serves as the paradigm of commitment to Hashem and His *mitzvos*. So strange is the law of the *Parah Adumah* that it baffled the minds of the wisest. *Shlomo Hamelech* says in *Koheles (7:13)* "I applied all my wisdom, but it remained beyond me." What makes this law even more puzzling is the paradox that the ashes of the heifer in the spring water despite cleansing the unclean, defiled the priest who performed the ritual. Here is the purest example of a complete obedience to the laws of Hashem. When every attempt to explain the (*chok*) law fails, the law still remains. The law is Divine, and the *Torah* which was dictated to Moshe by the infinite mind of Hashem transcends human comprehension.

The paradox of the *Parah Adumah* exists in everything we do. Those ashes serve a dual purpose. They cleanse and they defile, they purify and they contaminate. It is a remarkable lesson for us. We can transform and elevate the most basic impulses to an act of sanctification, or we can drag them down to the level of animalistic behavior. We can turn the skin of an animal into holy parchment for a *Torah* scroll. We can transform table into altar, food into sacrifice, and child into angel, or we can degrade this same food into garbage, and this same child into devil. It is that element of belief in Hashem, applying His mandate to our every day life, which allows us to attain the sublime level of having the *Shechina* present in the works of our hands.